

# ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

## DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES

### NEWS RELEASE



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#### 2012 TOGIAC HERRING FISHERY INFORMATION

This notice is intended to provide information to participants in the 2012 Togiak herring fishery. The 2012 herring biomass in Togiak District is forecast to be 123,745 tons, a slight decrease from 2011. The 2012 forecast is based on an age-structured analysis (ASA) model that has been used since 1993. Ages -7 and -8 herring are expected to comprise 52% of the projected herring biomass, with ages -6 and under making up another 19%. Ages 9-11 are expected to make up 23% of the spawning run, while the remaining 6% will be age 12+ fish. Average weight for age-7 and older herring should exceed 300 grams. The forecasted individual average weight of herring in the harvested biomass is 323 grams.

The Togiak herring fishery occurs on fish at or about the time of spawning. The occurrence and timing of spawning is related to water temperatures experienced by herring on the spawning grounds and also appears related to sea surface temperature and sea ice trends across the southeastern Bering Sea in the weeks prior to spawning. We track the average sea surface temperature reported at Unalaska between 24 February and 16 March as we consider this a useful index of conditions encountered by maturing herring ultimately bound for spawning grounds in and around the Togiak District. The 1995-2011 historical average temperature for that date range is 3.3° C whereas the average temperature experienced during 2012 has been a half a degree colder at 2.8° C. This is similar to 2007 and 2010 which experienced water temperatures that were -0.6° C and -0.8° C colder than normal and had first harvests on 10 and 11 May (Table 1). We anticipate the 2012 fishery to have similar timing. Additional evidence of a later than normal run can be seen in the greater than normal sea ice extent experienced in the Bering Sea this winter (Figure 1).

The Bristol Bay Herring Management Plan (BBHMP) (**5 AAC 27.865**) sets a maximum 20% exploitation rate for the Togiak District stock. Based on a forecasted run of 123,745 tons, up to 24,749 tons of herring will be available for harvest in 2012. Harvest allocation, in accordance with the BBHMP, will be as follows:

Fishery	Harvest Allocation
Spawn-on-Kelp	1,500 tons
Dutch Harbor Food and Bait	1,627 tons
Togiak Sac Roe	21,622 tons
Purse Seine (70%)	15,135 tons
Gillnet (30%)	6,487 tons

### **SAC ROE FISHERY**

The management strategy for the Togiak herring fishery is designed to provide for maximum sustained yield, while affording the greatest economic benefit to fishermen and processors.

In 2012, sac roe fisheries will again be managed to maximize product quality through long openings so permit holders can make smaller sets and harvest the best fish available. Processors will also have more flexibility to control harvest volume so holding time between harvest and processing is optimal. Available processing capacity will be assessed as companies register for the 2012 season. Daily freezing capacity is expected to be less than last year's capacity and will probably be between 2,000 and 2,100 tons per day. For the last few seasons, the department has opened the herring fishery as soon as threshold biomass has been documented and anticipates using this strategy again in 2012 to maximize fishing time. The department believes this strategy allows individual companies to maximize their processing capacity and decide what quality is suitable for their individual market.

#### **Purse Seine**

In recent years, the seine fleet has operated in conjunction with the processing industry in cooperative groups. Indications are this will be the case again in 2012 and therefore, fishing time and area will be very liberal. This should allow purse seine vessels to locate high quality herring and allow each cooperative to fill their company's daily processing capacity. This approach should result in fresher, higher quality roe, thereby maximizing product quality and value.

The department will not be coordinating any test fishing efforts. As always, the department will work with companies that want to make test sets prior to the threshold biomass being documented.

#### **Gillnet**

Management of the gillnet fishery will be similar to past years. Ample fishing time and area will be allowed to attempt to take the entire harvest guideline of 6,487 tons, while maintaining the specified 70/30 purse seine/gillnet ratio. Product quality will be a priority throughout the gillnet fishery.

In 2012, the department will primarily focus the gillnet fleet in the area east of Right Hand Point. The department will consider opening areas west of Right Hand Point to the gillnet fleet if weather conditions are unfavorable in the eastern section. As in 2011, the plan is to open the gillnet area to fishing when threshold biomass is present. Individual companies and fishermen can organize their own test fishing scheme once the area is open and make decisions on when to begin fishing for production. Until it is determined that marketable quality fish are present, participants should test cautiously with a small portion of gear.

At the December 2009 Alaska Board of Fisheries (BOF) meeting, the Egg Island Section was formally approved and the coordinates are now in regulation. Additionally, the legal complement of gear was increased to 100 fathoms. Although 100 fathoms of gear has been allowed for the past

several years, it was done by Emergency Order. It is now in regulation, so permit holders do not need to wait for an Emergency Order.

### ADF&G OPERATIONS 2012

Beginning in late April or early May, current fishery information will be available by calling the telephone recorder in Dillingham at (907) 842-5226. Recordings will be updated regularly throughout the season as information becomes available. The department will conduct regular aerial surveys of Togiak District beginning in late April or early May, depending on weather conditions. The department will not relocate to a field office in Togiak for 2012. The department will monitor marine VHF channel 7 from Dillingham and be available at the phone number listed at the top of this document. Fishing announcements and regular fishery updates will be communicated directly to each processor, published on the web and distributed by fax and email; contact the Dillingham office if you would like to be added to these distribution lists. Harvest and fishery opening information will be available with some delay at the Commercial Fisheries website: <http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=commercialbyareabristolbay.herring>

Table 1. Dates of observed 1<sup>st</sup> harvest with sea surface temperatures experienced between 24 February and 16 March at Unalaska, AK (current year average minus historical average).

Year	1st Harvest	Sea Surface Temp difference (° C)
2002	3-May	-0.23
2003	25-Apr	1.04
2004	29-Apr	0.54
2005	30-Apr	0.84
2006	12-May	0.20
2007	10-May	-0.79
2008	16-May	-1.02
2009	16-May	0.33
2010	11-May	-0.61
2011	8-May	0.83
10-yr Avg (2002-2011)	7-May	0.11

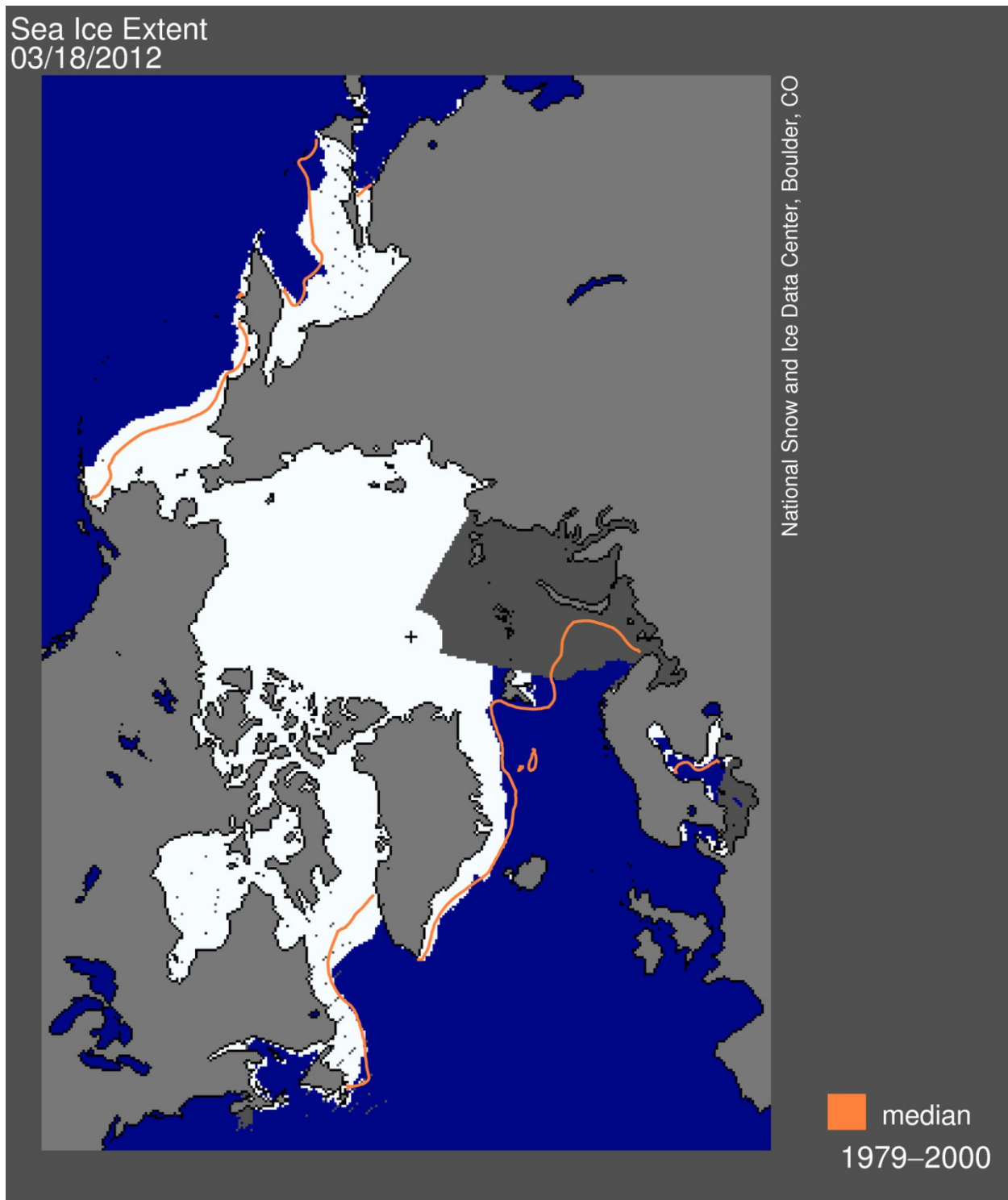


Figure 1. Arctic sea ice extent on 18 May 2012 as reported by the National Snow & Ice Data Center ([nsidc.org](http://nsidc.org)). Median ice extent 1979-2000 shown in orange.